The H.B.A. N.J. Newsletter

THE VOICE OF THE HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION

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H.B.A. DINNER DANCE HONORS OUTSTANDING HISPANIC ATTORNEYS

For the third consecutive year the H.B.A. hosted its Annual Scholarship Fund Dinner Dance which was held in Roselle Park on November 5, 1983. In addition to raising scholarship money for hispanic law students, this year's event had the theme "Women in the Law" and paid tribute to three hispanic women attorneys. Zaida "Josie" Torres, Zulima Farber and Gloria E. Soto were honored for their personal achievements and their contributions to the H.B.A. The honorees were presented with plaques by Hector R. Velazquez, the vice-president of the H.B.A.



Keynote Speaker: Mari Carmen Aponte

The keynote speaker of the evening was Mari Carmen Aponte, a partner in the Washington, D.C. firm of Pena, Aponte, & Ortiz-Daliot, and the current president of the Hispanic National Bar Association. Ms. Aponte, a graduate of Temple Law School and a former White House Fellow spoke of the need to overcome the remaining hurdles and institutional barriers to the full integration of hispanic attorneys into the legal profession. She also addressed the issue of the tremendous potential for political power which lies in the hispanic population of this country if hispanics register and vote in proportion to our growing numbers in the population.

At last year's evant, held on November 19, 1983 in North Bergen, the H.B.A. paid tribute to the three sitting hispanic judges in New Jersey. The Hon. John J. Dios of the New Jersey Superior Court, Essex County, the Hon. Julio M. Fuentes of the Newark Municipal Court, and the Hon. Severiano Lisboa III of the Jersey City Municipal Court were presented with awards by then H.B.A. president Hector de Soto. The Hon John Caro of the New York Appellate Court, First Division was the keynote speaker.

The first H.B.A. dinner dance which took place in New Brunswick in November, 1981 paid tribute to the Hon. Joseph Rodriguez, the New Jersey Public Advocate and the most prominent hispanic attorney in the state. The keynote speaker was the Hon. Stewart Pollack, Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. Also honored for her efforts in founding the H.B.A. and helping to establish it as a viable organization was the first president of the organization, Margarita Echevarria.



Vice President of the H.B.A. Hector R. Velazquez presents awards for personal achievement to (from left to right) Josie Torres, Gloria E. Soto and Zulima Farber.

* LEGAL BRIEFS *

The H.B.A. recently published a directory of hispanic attorneys in the state. Listing all hispanic attorneys by county, the directory is the first of its kind in the country. It has been sent to all hispanic attorneys as well as to officials of the state judiciary and executive branch. Any additions, changes or corrections should be forwarded to the Hon. Julio M. Fuentes.

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The Volunteer Lawyers Program of Essex County was established to offset the cutbacks in federal funding suffered by the Essex-Newark Legal Services Corp. The purpose of the VLP is to provide private bar representation of poor persons on a pro bono basis. The program is actively seeking spanish-speaking attorneys to participate to represent hispanic clients. Volunteer attorneys are asked to give 20-25 hours or to handle two cases per year. For further information contact Delores McMorrin or Sandy West at 624-4500.

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On Saturday, February 11, 1984 the Essex County Bar Association is sponsoring an Automobile Liability Insurance Seminar at Mayfair Farms in West Orange, 9 A.M. to 12 Noon. A special rate is available to H.B.A. members of $25. The H.B.A. general membership meeting and election of officers will follow immediately. Lunch will be provided to H.B.A. members at no charge.

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Hector de Soto, the immediate past president of the H.B.A. has been named Director of Personnel for the Newark Board of Education. de Soto had been serving as Associate Counsel in the Board's Legal Department.

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Margarita Echevarria has been named to the board of the New Jersey Self-Insurers Association.

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The H.B.A. Newsletter seeks contributions of articles, guest editorials and news items. Submit work to Grissele Camacho-Pagan.

★ GUEST EDITORIAL ★

As members of the H.B.A., we do not need to be reminded of how small our numbers are in our chosen profession. Nevertheless, it still does come as a shock to read in the National Law Journal (ed. 12/20/82) that of 127,312 students enrolled in approved law schools in the Fall of 1981 in all 50 states, only 2.5 percent were Hispanic. That figure comes to a little over three thousand students. Clearly, this in an inadequate representation of Hispanics in the nation's law schools.

The H.B.A., of course has as one of its' stated purposes to increase the number of Hispanics in the legal profession. One of our first activities toward this end was to establish a Scholarship Fund. Our immediate goal is to keep in school those students who are succeeding in their studies by assisting them financially. The proceeds of our annual dinner dance are allocated to a scholarship account. We have already been able to assist four law students.

As a group we are working to improve the statistics I mentioned earlier. On an individual basis, our members can also make a difference. When asked to participate in a "Career Day" at a high school, College, or law school, your positive response will definitely assist in improving our situation. My personal experience has confirmed that not only do you serve as a positive role model but since your life experiences will generally coincide with that of your Hispanic audience, your presentation will be of special significance to them.

The Trustees of the H.B.A. will be making our membership list available to educational organizations and institutions for "Career Day" presentations. Please cooperate.

Margarita Echevarria

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HISPANIC ATTORNEYS GATHER IN WASHINGTON



Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Hon. Sandra Day O'Connor is introduced by the Hon. Ricardo Urbina.

The Hispanic National Bar Association (H.N.B.A.) convened its national convention in Washington, D.C. on October 13-16, 1983, with the theme "Progress through Justice." Over 200 hispanic attorneys from throughout the country participated in a variety of workshops ranging from "Computers in the Law Office" to "International Law." A number of national figures and prominent hispanic attorneys addressed the convention, among them Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Sandra Day O'Connor, Katherine Ortega, Treasurer of the U.S. and the Hon. Cruz Reynoso, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court.

The H.B.A. of New Jersey was represented at the Convention by board member Margarita Echevarria, treasurer, Evelyn Faria, and members, Hon. Severiano Lisboa III and Grissele Camacho-Pagan. Most striking to those of us who attended was the tremendously broad range of hispanic attorneys, both geographically and by area of expertise. To cite a few examples: there is a hispanic partner in the major Wall St. law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton; the first hispanic is presently clerking for a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; there is a female municipal court judge in Gary, Indiana. There are hispanic attorneys representing clients as diverse as the U.S. government, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and the poor of Newark, N.J.

The gathering of so many and diverse hispanic attorneys made very vivid the realization of the potential we have as hispanic attorneys to influence the politics of this nation and the direction of our profession.

Next year the H.N.B.A. will hold its Convention in Los Angeles, California. Evelyn Faria and Grissele Camacho-Pagan are the representatives from New Jersey who will maintain communication with the regional president and the national officers of the H.N.B.A.

LISBOA NAMED PRESIDING JUDGE IN JERSEY CITY



Hon. Severiano Lisboa III

Severiano Lisboa, III, was sworn in on January 13, 1984 as the presiding judge of the Jersey City Municipal Court. Judge Lisboa succeeds the Hon. Shirley Tolentino who was recently elevated to the Superior Court of New Jersey. He was named to the post by Jersey City Mayor Gerald McCann.

As presiding Judge Lisboa administers the whole operation of the municipal court with responsability for the criminal calendar, motor vehicle offenses and night court. Judge Lisboa supervises five other municipal court judges assigning cases to them as well as supervising court administrators.

Asked to comment on the significance of his appointment, Judge Lisboa told the H.B.A. Newsletter that it was an achievement for the hispanic community as well as for himself to have a hispanic for the first time in this state named to such a position. Presently there are two other hispanic judges in N.J.: the Hon. John J. Dios of the Superior Court and the Hon. Julio M. Fuentes of the Newark Municipal Court.

P.R.L.D.E.F. IN CRISIS

The Puerto Rican Legal Defense & Education Fund is undergoing internal turmoil resulting from a conflict between its Director and the recently formed union representing the staff of the Fund. The union has been in disagreement with Director Jack John Olivero on policy decisions which the union claims are contrary to the interest of the Fund's clients. The action which apparently triggered the present crisis was the firing by Olivero of an attorney, Gabe Kaimowitz, for alleged "economic reasons." The union alleges that the firing was for Kaimowitz's union activities.

On November 21, 1983 the union took what its spokesman describes as a job action and seized the Fund's offices at 95 Madison Ave., in New York. In December the Board of Directors headed by Chairman Michael Vive, terminated the staff which it claims "engaged in illegal acts and acts of misconduct" according to a statement given by Olivero to the H.B.A. Newsletter. Olivero claims that the staff was given an opportunity prior to the termination to meet with management to discuss the situation, an opportunity which he claims the union did not take. The union claims that notice of such a meeting was only received by 5 of 18 members and that the union in fact attempted to postpone the meeting but was ignored by Olivero who then proceeded with the firings. The union in the meantime called for a strike and has picketed P.R.L.D.E.F. offices.

Various organizations and prominent Hispanic leaders have called on both sides to submit the dispute to mediation and to get the work of the Fund back on track. The union claims that management has refused to do so.

The latest developments in the crisis is that Jack John Olivero resigned as director on January 6, 1984 but was asked by the Board to stay on to January 20, 1984 so the Board can name an interim Director. The union is currently negotiating with the Chairman of the Board, Vive. A board meeting to deal with the crisis and the state of negotiations was scheduled for January 21, 1984.

LAW STUDENTS AIDED BY H.B.A. SCHOLARSHIPS

Since its inception the H.B.A. has had as one of its objectives to help hispanic law students. The Scholarship Fund was therefore one of the first accomplishments of the organization. Various activities have been held in the last three years to raise money, and individual members have made financial contributions to the fund.

In 1982 the first two H.B.A. scholarships were awarded. The recipients were Carmen Garcia of Rutgers Law School in Camden, class of 1984 and Onofre Cintron of Seton Hall Law School, class of 1983. The 1983 recipients were Nina Rios of Seton Hall Law School, class of 1984 and Jose Fernandez, Rutgers Law School in Newark, class of 1984.

Applications for the scholarships are sent each year in the spring to the three New Jersey law schools. A committee reviews all applications and makes the selections on the basis of merit and financial need. For further information regarding scholarship applications contact Margarita Echevarria, Hector de Soto, or Hon Julio M. Fuentes.

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